

CLAIMS

1. An audio storage and reproducing apparatus, comprising:
 - a storage medium for storing one or more encoded audio data files;
 - a data expander coupled to the storage medium for decoding the one or more encoded audio data files;
 - an audio output adapted to produce audio corresponding to an encoded audio data file that has been decoded by the data expander;
 - a personal computer network interface adapted to facilitate transfer of encoded audio files to an external storage device; and
 - a personal computer bus for transmitting data from the storage medium to the data expander and the audio output or from the storage medium to the network interface.
2. An audio storage and reproducing apparatus as in Claim 1, wherein the storage medium comprises a hard disk drive.
3. An audio storage and reproducing apparatus as in Claim 1, wherein the storage medium comprises a flash memory device.
4. An audio storage and reproducing apparatus as in Claim 1, wherein the audio output includes one or more speakers.

5. An audio storage and reproducing apparatus as in Claim 4, further comprising an amplifier to process an encoded audio data file that has been decoded by the data expander for transmission through the audio output.

6. An audio storage and reproducing apparatus as in Claim 4, wherein the one or more speakers can be selectively detached from said apparatus.

7. An audio storage and reproducing apparatus as in Claim 6, wherein the audio output further includes a terminal that is exposed upon detachment of the one or more speakers and that is adapted to be coupled to an audio input of a vehicle audio system.

8. An audio storage and reproducing apparatus as in Claim 1, wherein the audio output is adapted to be coupled to an audio input of a vehicle audio system.

9. An audio storage and reproducing apparatus as in Claim 1, wherein the personal computer network interface includes an Ethernet port.

10. An audio storage and reproducing apparatus as in Claim 1, further comprising one or more fasteners adapted to cooperate with structural members of a vehicle audio system to allow rapid connection and disconnection of said apparatus to the vehicle audio system.

11. An audio storage and reproducing apparatus, comprising:

storage means for storing one or more encoded audio data files;

data expansion means coupled to the storage means for decoding the one or more encoded audio data files;

audio output means for producing audio corresponding to an encoded audio data file that has been decoded by the data expansion means;

a personal computer network interface adapted to facilitate transfer of encoded audio files from the storage means to an external storage device; and

a personal computer bus for transmitting data from the storage means to the data expansion means and the audio output means or from the storage means to the network interface.

12. An audio storage and reproducing apparatus as in Claim 11, wherein the audio output means includes one or more speakers.

13. An audio storage and reproducing apparatus as in Claim 12, further comprising an amplifier to process an encoded audio data file that has been decoded by the data expander for transmission through the audio output means.

14. An audio storage and reproducing apparatus as in Claim 11, wherein the audio output means are adapted to be coupled to audio input means of a vehicle audio system.

15. An audio storage and reproducing apparatus capable of selective operation as an addressable member of a computer network, a standalone audio player, and an in-vehicle audio player, said apparatus comprising:

- a storage medium for storing one or more encoded audio data files;
- a data expander coupled to the storage medium for decoding the one or more encoded audio data files.
- an input key operably connected to the data expander;
- an audio output adapted to produce audio corresponding to an encoded audio data file that has been decoded by the data expander;
- a network protocol adapted to allow other members of said network to access the storage medium when said apparatus is operating as an addressable member of a computer network;
- a network interface adapted to operably connect said apparatus to said network; and
- one or more fasteners adapted to cooperate with structural members of a vehicle audio system to allow rapid connection and disconnection of said apparatus to the vehicle operating system.

16. An audio storage and reproducing apparatus as in Claim 15, wherein the storage medium comprises a hard disk drive.

17. An audio storage and reproducing apparatus as in Claim 15, wherein the storage medium comprises a flash memory device.

18. An audio storage and reproducing apparatus as in Claim 15, wherein the audio output includes one or more speakers, a headphone jack, and a connector for coupling the audio output to an audio input of a vehicle audio system.

19. An audio storage and reproducing apparatus as in Claim 18, wherein the one or more speakers can be selectively detached from said apparatus.

20. An audio storage and reproducing apparatus as in Claim 18, further comprising a rechargeable power supply.